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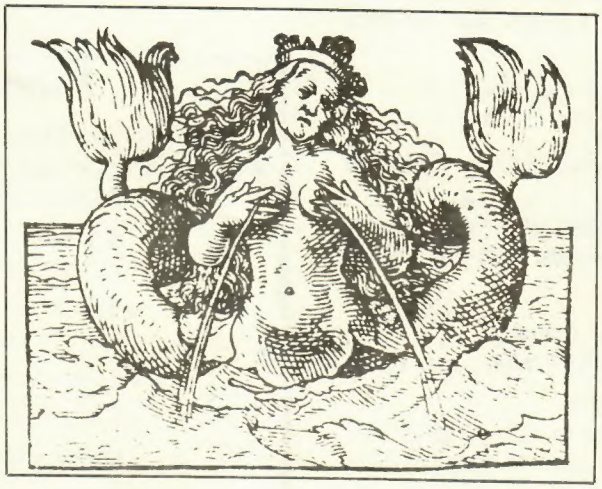
Monsters Strange and Creatures Terrible:
A Historical Review of Mystery Animals in Michigan

[Introduction]

WITHIN the past several years, investigators of unusual phenomena have continued to devote an increasing part of their attention to the study of Mystery Animal reports and stories. This is probably due to the growing phenomenological approach to UFOs, apparitions, hallucinations, and 'strange awakenings.' This approach, which takes the psychological, subjective, and symbolic dimensions of the reports into consideration, suggests that aspects of these phenomena originate from a common archetypal matrix. Another factor may involve the reports which seemingly link 'creature phenomena' with UFOs, an idea now firmly implanted in the popular imagination.



While these important topics will be fully dealt with at a later date, this issue of the **Report on Current Research** is solely devoted to a chronological examination of Michigan creature accounts. In addition to the hope that this listing will stimulate further attempts at geographically-limited surveys, it is published as a reference source for folklorists, Forteans, and other interested researchers. At the present time, no claims are made about the authenticity or nature of the reported phenomena. However, it is the opinion of Michigan Anomaly Research that these phenomena deserve a scholarly and scientific examination.

This compilation would be impossible if not for the generous support of those who contributed data, whose names appear at the end of the listing.

A Chronology of Michigan Creatures

1839—Gen: Summer—Michigan City, Indiana
A "wild child" with chestnut colored hair is seen roaming the vicinity of Fish Lake, "setting up the most frightful and hideous yells." (A-1)

1886—Gen: August—Narrow Lake, Eaton County
A lake monster with a body the size of a stove pipe and a head resembling that of a serpent is seen by area residents. (C-1)

1891—Gen: October—Gladwin, Michigan
Two men encounter a 7-foot tall, hair covered "wild man" that killed one witness's bull dog. (A-2)

1896—Gen: Pine Lake, Cass County
Phantom panther plagues area around Edwardsburg, Michigan and Pine Lake. (B-1)

1897—April 10—Pine Lake, Cass County
Phantom panther startles fisherman and later attacks sheep and cattle. (B-2)

1897—Gen: Late April—Sailor, Indiana
Two farmers encounter a Bigfoot-type creature whose body looked like that of a man but was covered with hair. (A-3)

1937—Gen—Saginaw, Michigan
Fisherman sees a man-like monster climb up a river bank, lean on a tree, and then return to the water. The man reportedly suffered a nervous breakdown. (A-4)

1947—Gen: November—Sturgis, Michigan
Phantom panther activity; several sightings; tracks too large to be those of dog. (B-3)

Gen: Late 40's—Sylvan Lake, Michigan
An airplane pilot searching for drowning victim sees a giant turtle about the size of a car dragging the body around the lake. The man's body was never recovered. (E-1)

1951—Gen: Fall—Charlotte, Michigan
A huge ape-like creature is spotted by six or seven people; the area later becomes known as "Gorilla Swamp." (A-5)

1953—Gen. Elizabeth Lake, Oakland County
A 24-inch alligator is captured. (D-1)

1955—Gen: June/July—Lower Long Lake, Oakland County
At least two reported alligator sightings; gator tracks around the lake; one of the creatures was 72-inches long. (D-2)

1955—July 9—Island Lake, Oakland County
An alligator 60- to 70- inches in length was seen. (D-3)

1956—Gen: May—Marshall, Michigan
A large hair-covered creature with glowing green eyes and a sulphurous smell attempts to abduct two men after a heavy electrical storm. (A-5)

1956—Gen: June—Harris Lake, Oakland County
A 17-inch alligator is captured

1956—Gen: June—Susin Lake, Oakland County
Rumors of alligators in lake.

1957—July 10—Lower Long Lake, Oakland County
A 57-inch long alligator is captured. (D-5)

1957—August 4—Susin Lake, Oakland County
A 42-inch long alligator is killed. (D-6)

1958—October—Mount Clemens, Michigan
A 14-inch long alligator is captured. (D-7)

1959—Gen: Sister Lakes, Michigan
A 21-year-old mother sees a phantom gorilla-like creature outside her home. (A-6)

Gen: Late 50's or early 60's—Leonard, Michigan
A black panther roams the Leonard area for the majority of one summer. Daylight sightings; tracks; also spotted by motorists. (B-4)

1960—November 18—Hines Park; Detroit, Michigan
A 36-inch long alligator is captured. (D-8)

Gen: Early 1960's—Salem, Michigan
A serpent-like creature or huge snake has area farmers "in an uproar"; 15-feet long. (E-2)

1962—Gen—Sister Lakes, Michigan
A Bigfoot-type creature is reportedly seen. Nine feet tall;black face;"big, bright, shining eyes." (A-7)

1964—June 9—Sister Lakes, Michigan
Four witnesses see an ape-like creature with brilliantly shining eyes after a thunderstorm. Makes gurgling sounds. Deputies discover 18-inch footprints. (A-8)

1964—June 11—Sister Lakes, Michigan
Three girls encounter a bear-like creature with a black face walking upright. Authorities felt that the girls were sincere. (A-9)

1964—July 13—nr. Dowagiac, Michigan
A married couple observes a BHM with reddish-brown hair from their car for several minutes in the vicinity of Dowagiac Swamp. It made no attempt to approach them, acting in a shy manner, and eventually climbed a tree. Fire department personnel who were sent to the scene discovered scratches and broken limbs on the tree. (A-10)

Report Categories

In order to facilitate the organization of this report, Mystery Animal sightings were grouped into five basic categories. These categories are:

(A) •'Bigfoot'-type creatures; Anthropoids, 'Big Hairy Monsters' (BHMs), Wild Men, etc.

(B) ★ Black panthers, mystery pumas, and large phantom cats.

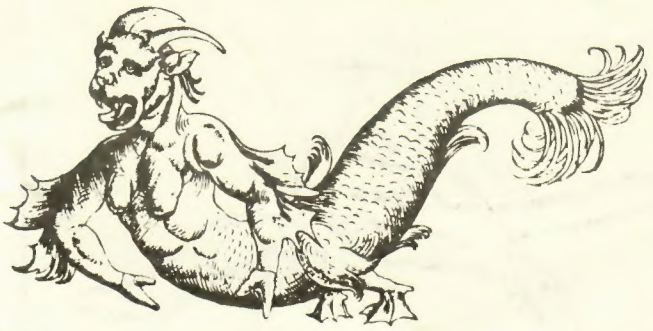
(C) ▲ Lake monsters, 'sea serpents,' etc.

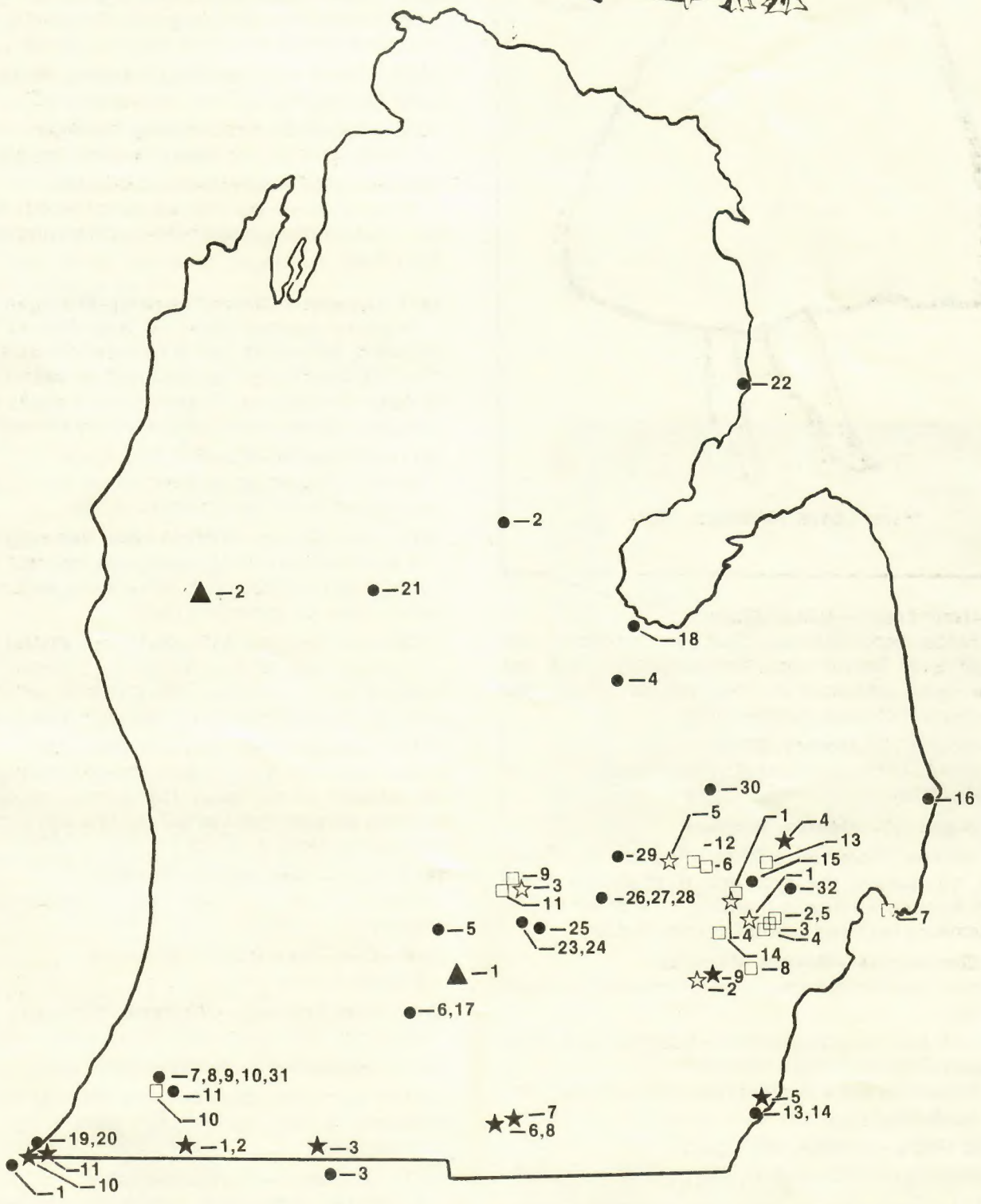
(D) □ Out-of-place animals. Alligators.

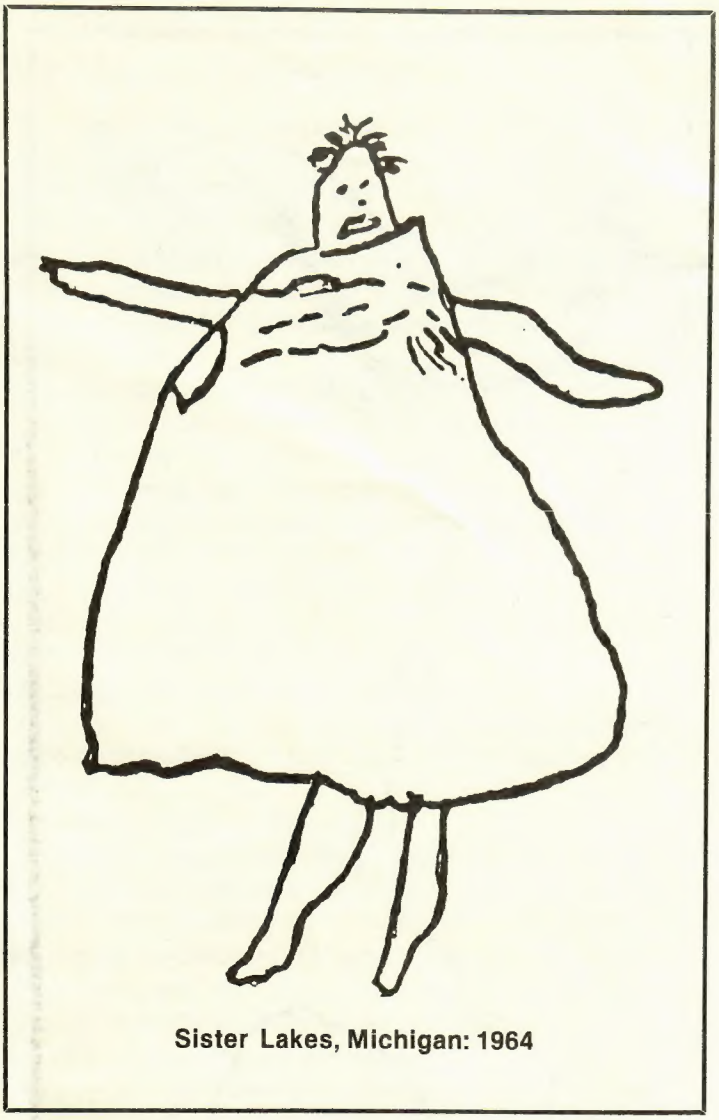
(E) ☆ Other unidentifides; kangaroos, monsters, etc.

Two good phenomenological approaches to Mystery Animal reports are **Creatures of the Outer Edge** by Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman (Warner, 1978) and John Keel's **Strange Creatures from Time and Space** (Fawcett, 1970).

Distribution of "Creature" Reports
Lower Pennisula (1839—1978)







witness drawing

Sister Lakes, Michigan: 1964

1964—Gen: "Late"— Niles, Michigan

A Chicago motorist is attacked by "something that had red eyes, brown hair, and squeales." His car window was shattered in four places where the creature struck the automobile. (A-11)

1965—August 11—Monroe, Michigan

A man fires a shotgun blast at a hairy creature behind his home. (A-12)

1965—August 13—Monroe, Michigan

Two women encounter a BHM while driving home. As the car passed the creature, it thrust its hand through an open window and grabbed the driver by the hair, slamming her head against the car. (A-13)

1965—Gen: August—Monroe, Michigan

Police receive sixteen reports of a large, hair-covered creatures.

1965—Gen: August or September—Vooheis Lake, Oakland County

Two fishermen see a Bigfoot-type creature rise from the water. (A-14)

Gen: Mid 1960's—Monroe, Michigan

A phantom panther is seen by two gentlemen. (B-5)

1966—Late November—nr. Bird Lake, Hillsdale County

A man sees a huge cat drag a dead deer across a road. (B-6)

1967—January 6—Pittsford, Michigan

Giant 4½-inch long cat prints are found. (B-7)

1967—January 9—Bird Lake, Hillsdale County

Three soil conservation employees discover huge cat prints leading toward Bird Lake. They were 4- to 5-inches long and 4-inches wide. (B-8)

1967—May 31—East Lansing, Michigan

16-inch long alligator is captured. (D-9)

Gen—Magician Lake area—Cass County

Many residents spot large cat-like animal. An out-of-place ocelot is later shot in the area. (D-10)

1968—June 6—Capitol Bldg., Lansing, Michigan

An 18-inch long alligator is captured. (D-11)

1968—August 3—East Lansing, Michigan

Unidentified citizen sees phantom kangaroo. (E-3)

1969—April 23—Port Huron, Michigan

Three children are chased out of woods by a 6-foot tall creature that stood on its hind legs and had greyish hair. (A-15)

1971—August—Canton Township, Michigan

Phantom panther wave. **5/6 Aug:** Farmer loses 197 chickens, 55 rabbits, and 6 turkeys to mystery animal-killer. **10 Aug:** Large cat-like creature seen in daylight. **25 Aug:** 58 chickens, 40 geese, and 2 ducks are killed. **26 Aug:** 4 rabbits are killed by Mystery Animal. (B-9)

1971—October 6—Marshall, Michigan

Several shaken youngsters report seeing a BHM to local law enforcement officials. (A-16)

1972—Gen: Spring—Nichols Lake, Newaygo County

A woman sees a 30-foot long lake monster floating in water. It had a 6-foot neck, left a wake, and made large waves when it submerged. (C-1)

1973—Gen: Spring—Williams Lake, Oakland County

A young couple is attacked by a slimy, lizard-like creature while parking. The creature, which dented their car, had been seen before in the area. (E-4)

1973—Gen: Summer—Bay City, Michigan

Two boys see a large, hair covered creature. As the two started to run away the animal let out an ear-splitting scream that started out low and turned into a high-pitched whine. (A-17)

1973—Gen—New Buffalo, Michigan

Flap of BF activity and parapsychological phenomena. (A-18)

1976—Gen—New Buffalo, Michigan

Bigfoot activity. (A-19)

1977—Gen: February—Michiana, Michigan

Phantom panther activity; tracks discovered. (B-10)

1977—September 3—Barryton, Michigan

After two large dogs become restless their owner discovers a long trail of 16½-inch long footprints outside. (A-20)

1977—October 1—Oscoda, Michigan

A hunter discovers strangely shaped 3-toed

footprints in deep woods. The 10-inch prints puzzled police investigators. (A-21)

1978—April 29—Mason, Michigan
Three men see an eight-foot tall creature, entirely black in color, with green shining eyes. (A-22)

1978—Late May—Mason, Michigan
Man sees a BHM at distance of 600 feet. He said it was 9-feet tall and hairy. (A-23)

1978—July 13—Dansville/Mason, Michigan
Two motorists driving in opposite directions watch a tall, two-legged creature cross the road as they approached in the early morning hours. They both reported the incident to the Ingham County Sheriff's Department. (A-24)

1978—July 30/31—Fowlerville, Michigan
A BHM is reportedly seen by woman and her son. Strange screams are heard in the area. (A-25)

1978—August 12—Fowlerville, Michigan
Two women hear a "tremendous thud and scream" in same area as earlier creature sighting. (A-26)

1978—August 16—Fowlerville, Michigan
A man fires three shots at eight-foot tall BHM standing 45 feet away. (A-27)

1978—August 30—Byron, Michigan
Three residents see a BHM that has a foul odor and makes gurgling sounds; police find unusual tracks in area. (A-28)

Gen: No date—nr. Davison, Michigan
BHM follows car; four witnesses. (A-29)

Gen: No Date—Crystal Lake, Oakland County
Alligators have been seen in this Oakland County Lake. (D-12)

Gen: No Date—Fenton, Michigan
An eight-foot tall sloth was seen by several people. (E-5)

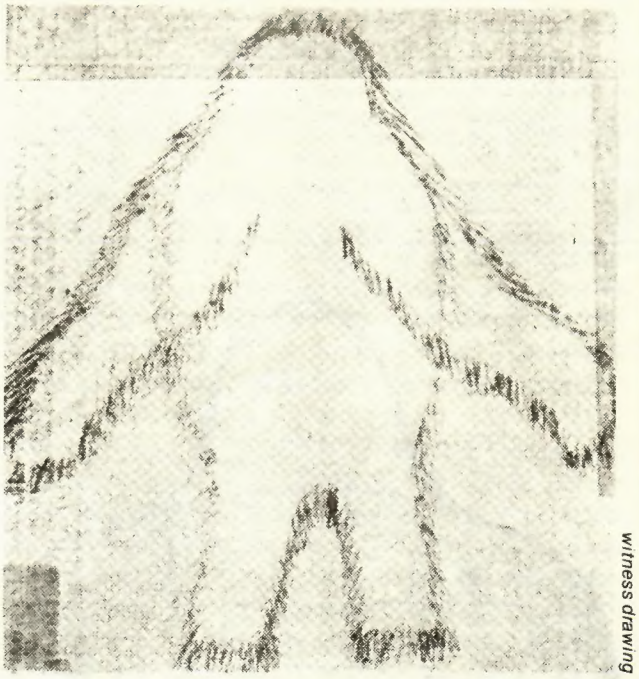
Gen: No Date—Magician Lake, Cass County
A woman living near Magician Lake claimed that a hair-covered creature lifted her house trailer "three quarters of the way off the ground" and then dropped it. (A-30)

Gen: No Date—New Buffalo, Michigan
Phantom panther activity. (B-11)

Gen: No Date—Lake Orion, Oakland County
Alligators have been seen in this Oakland County lake. (D-13)

Gen: No Date—nr. Rochester, Michigan
A BF-type creature seen in an "upside-down umbrella of light." (A-31)

Gen: No Date—Walled Lake, Michigan
Alligators have been seen in this Oakland County lake. (D-14)



witness drawing

Monroe, Michigan: 1965

Christine VanAcker with a classic black eye

[Acknowledgements]

We would like to extend a special thanks to: Tom Adams, Gray Barker, Tim Church, Loren Coleman, Lucius Farish, John Green, Henry Hoffman, Gary Mangiacopra, Pat McKowan, Lawrence Neely, and Clint Williams.

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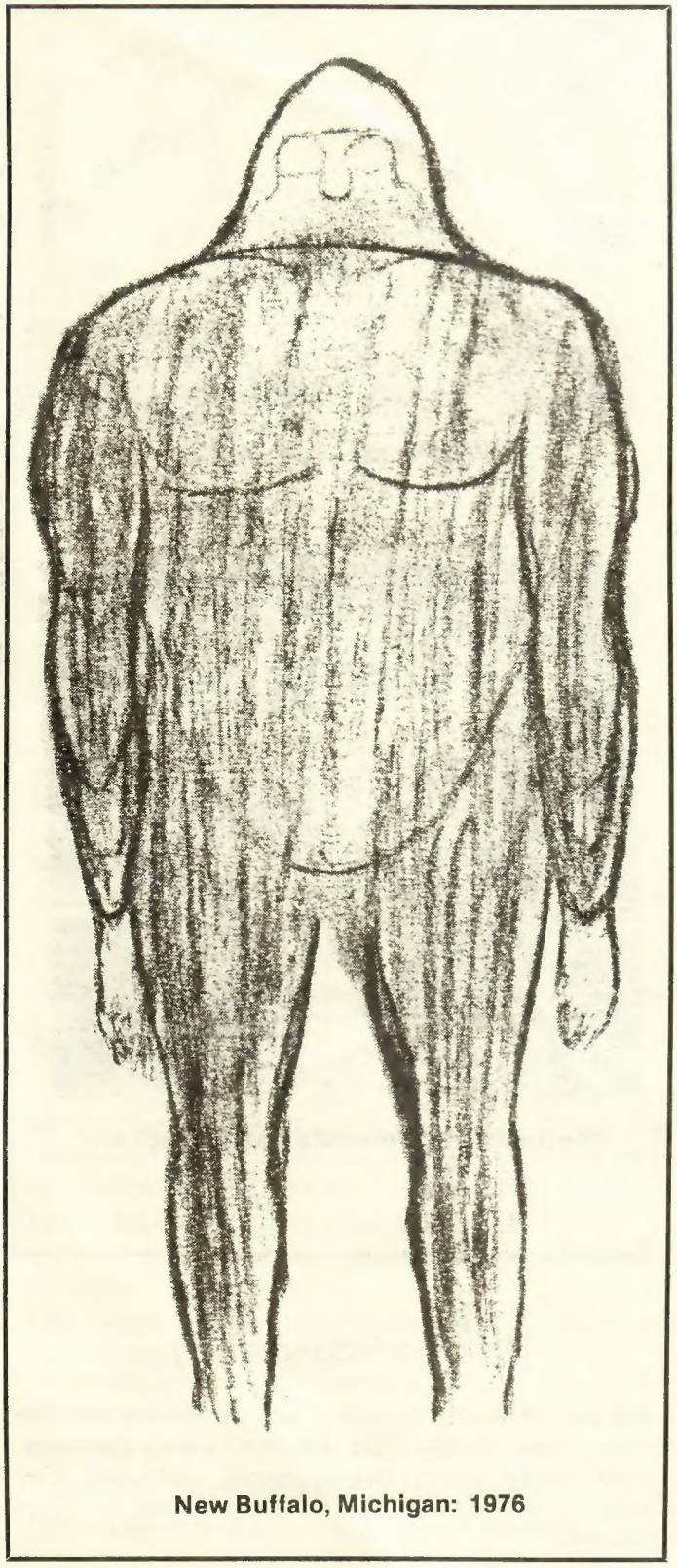

witness drawing

New Buffalo, Michigan: 1976

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Reviews

[Journals]

Fortean Times: The Journal of Strange Phenomena, 9-12 St. Annes Court, London W1, England; $8 per year; airmail add $6. The current issue is nearly 70 pp long with John Michell on **Simulacra** and spontaneous images in nature; Robert JM Rickard on a heretical stigmatic (with photos); and Loren Coleman 'On the Trail' of phantom panthers. Also included are columns, reviews, and recent notes. If you are interested in any aspect of strange phenomena, **FT** is essential reading. U.S. subscribers may find it more convenient to send payment to: **Fortean Times**, Box 1479, Grand Rapids, MI 49501. Published quarterly.

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Magonia; 64 Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4AW, England; $4. Perhaps the world's leading UFO journal, **Magonia** (formerly MUFOB) is primarily devoted to the psychological, sociological and mythic elements of the UFO phenomena. The current issue includes a remarkable contribution by John Fletcher on religious and secular millenarianism entitled, "Lo! He comes in clouds descending." Highly recommended. Quarterly.

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Stigmata; Box 1094, Paris, Texas 75460; $1 per issue. A consistently comprehensive and inclusive publication on cattle mutilation phenomena by a Texas-based investigatory group.

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UFO & Related Phenomena News; P.O. Box 270, West Terre Haute, IN 47885; $3 per year; bimonthly. Devoted to the distribution of UFO and mutilation reports through the print medium or re-printed newspaper stories. Nicely produced and worth the price.

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ZETETIC SCHOLAR: An Independent Scientific Review of Claims of Anomalies and the Paranormal: Dept. of Sociology, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197; $10 per year. Comments, criticism, and contributions by many scholars and scientists on a variety of paranormal claims. Issue number five is organized around the theme "Professors on PSI & UFOs", 124 pp. Worth the price for the bibliography alone. Published quarterly.

[Books]

There are some intriguing creatures and manifestations in Don Farrant's **Haunted Houses of Grand Rapids (Vol. 1)** *(Ivystone Publications, Box 23, Ada, Mi 49301)*, but not much in the way of ideas. Because Farrant groups together different types of phenomena under the heading of ghosts, rather than pursuing each occurence in its own direction, the book is not a thorough treatment of its subject. Farrant pares his material down to those instances which seem to bear the handprint of the dead.

In the introduction, the author eagerly makes the point that he views none of this too seriously: "I am not a medium or spiritualist," he writes, implying that romantic occultism is the subject's usual niche. Instead, he assembles his cases into "chilling, authentic local ghost stories", an approach which automatically excludes the important but less obvious facets of each case, especially witness psychology.

From another standpoint, though, Farrant's book is fairly successful, for the form of the traditional 'ghost story' is large enough to let in a lot of information.

The value in legends and fables is that they confer a sense of unity on phenomena which, isolated, might appear as meaningless intrusions of chaos, and this is because the narrative form itself depends on

Announcing a special issue of The Report on Current Research

The next issue of **The Report on Current Research**, comprising numbers 3 & 4, will be a special, double-length examination of the November 1978 Michigan UFO wave. This account, which is the result of extensive field investigations conducted by Dr. Ron Westrum and David Fideler, will describe important multiple-witness case histories of low-level flyovers and daylight discs. In addition, Dr. Westrum has prepared an exclusive report on his investigation of two closely-spaced 'shootouts' with 'phantom attackers'. In one of these cases, a home is invaded by 'little men,' highly reminiscent ot the episode at Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Also, don't miss future issues of **The Report on Current Research**, now in preparation:

- ★ **Airships in Michigan**
- ★ **More on UFOs and geophysics**
- ★ **A Grand Rapids close encounter with accompanying psi phenomena**
- ★ **Archetypal dimensions of the UFO experience**
- ★ **Catalogue of Michigan UFO landings**

...and much more, including reviews, case histories, and news on work in progress.

coherence. Since the 'facts' of a given legend are usually fixed, either by tradition or what was actually seen and reported, the movement and resolution of fables are strongly psychological.

Characters in fables tend to be painted in broad strokes at the expense of the psychological believability of the individuals undergoing the root experience around which the tale is based (assuming some basis in literal truth). However, the characters do represent the more general, 'typical' psychology of a particular time and place—a psychic cross-section.

This is equally true of fairy myths which, bridging the real and the believed-in express the reverence in which agricultural society held nature, and also the more objective, widely reported airship sightings of 1897, when impossible Jules Verne-type contraptions were spotted in the skies of developing nations around the world. These sightings seem to reflect the Victorian expectation of a soaring technological future, in which man would use the machine to ascend to the next rung of evolution.

There is something of this is the story *Strange Bedfellows* from **Haunted Houses**, in which an art student named Jesse is plagued by a ghost who tears his nude life-studies down from the walls of his Heritage Hill apartment. Though we are told little of Jesse himself, and so have no way of knowing if the poltergeist is the externalization of something like sexual guilt, the ghost's actions are consistent with the 'spirit' of Grand Rapids, a city tied firmly to Calvinist Puritanism. This Puritanism finds enough of a faint echo in the narration to be identifiable when Farrant states (with whimsy) that the spirit in Jesse's room was obviously adverse to—not 'nudity', mind you, but—"the display of naked flesh".

Later, Jesse wakes up one night to find "the thin, gaunt figure of a man... on the other side of the bed... stark naked and sickly pale", another distorted sexual image rooted in denial of the flesh. It is interesting to note that the Heritage Hill district of Grand Rapids has probably one of the greatest concentration of churches in the city.

There are other instances like these in Farrant's book which seem to be triggered by a specific action, itself symbolic or representative of a larger cultural psychology—like the Indian ghost that appears in Tom Rush's basement late in 1939 after he and his wife had been "firing guns". The Indian, a modern archetype of savagery, could be viewed as a reflection of or comment on the brutality of the approaching war years, whose seeds must already have been sprouting in the social psyche.

That Farrant has found a real-life historical precedent for the Indian—and others for other ghosts—does not rule out a symbolic interpretation of the apparition. First, the question of context still remains—why did the Indian appear at that specific time? Second, the 'spirit' of the Indian may simply be the medium through which a content-laden psychic event manifested itself, just as our dreams are certainly more meaningful than the scraps of thoughts and events of the previous day which give them shape.

Essential information for studying the ghost phenomena beyond the basic apparitions is present in Farrant's book in a partially developed form. To expand it, the author would not have to change his narrative style. Those elements that would give more psychological, symbolic and contextual validity to the reports are the same details that would add richness to the occurences as stories, such as a greater emphasis on setting and characters to balance the thrust of pure plot. Perhaps in volume two this could be done by having the witnesses tell larger portions of their stories in their own words, or by using more direct quotes.

Still, **Haunted Houses** brings a liveliness to its material that is absent from many a cold case-study. Farrant deserves praise for painstakingly unearthing and recording strange events which otherwise would never have surfaced. The author has made a good contribution to the body of American folklore, and shown himself to be a talented storyteller in the process, capable of "chilling, real life ghost stories" indeed.

—Bob Tarte

You are invited to receive "The Report on Current Research"

MAR, a not-for-profit research group, seeks to explore newly emerging dimensions of UFO and unusual phenomena reports. We support a multi-faceted approach to these mysteries, and a scientific spirit that recognizes and investigates all reported phenomena, whether generally accepted or not. MAR receives absolutely no outside funding at the present time, and your help is needed.

Individuals able to donate services or equipment receive **The Report on Current Research**, as well as all other MAR publications, in return for their gracious support.

Other interested individuals and agencies may receive **The Report** at the rate of $5 for 4 issues.

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